

EXCALIBUR  
CROSSING THE LINE

NOV.

150

by Paul A. Cordell

# THE SCREAMING STAR



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**EXCALIBUR:** A Space Odyssey. Written and Drawn by Paul M. Cordel. © 1973 by Cougar Comix Inc., a division of Progressive Publications. Vol. 1, No. 1, Special Debut Edition, November, 1973. Published every three months. Any reproduction of the contents of this publication is prohibited. Recommended background music for greatest reading pleasure: "Moving Waves" by Focus: Sire SAS 7401 Charles Pitts, Jr. advisor; Gerald Brown, editor. Fanomatic quote © 1972 New York Times.



# EXCALIBUR

a space odyssey



paul m. cordel





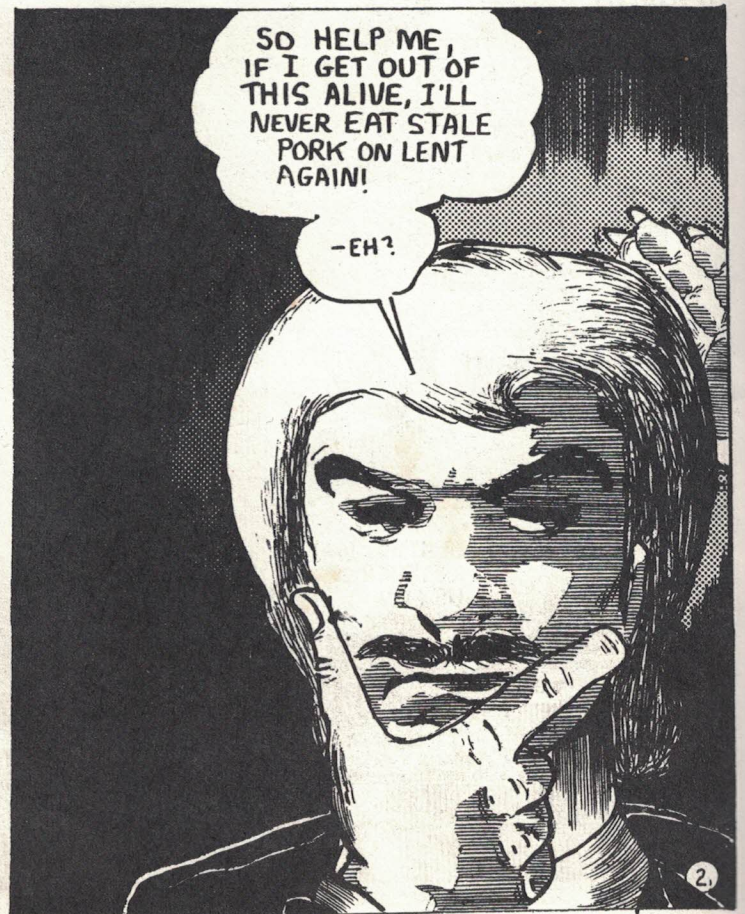
MOTHER  
MACGRUDDER!!  
I THOUGHT I  
WAS JUST  
HAVING A BAD  
DREAM...



....BUT THIS  
WHOLE FURSCHLINGIN'  
THING'S FOR REAL!!!

...I'VE BEEN  
SHANGHAIED BY  
SPACE SPOOKS!!!

OH, WOW!!  
WHAT NOW,  
YOU MENTAL  
MARVEL OF  
AN AD-FIRM.  
EXECUTIVE?  
HAH??  
WHAT NOW?



SO HELP ME,  
IF I GET OUT OF  
THIS ALIVE, I'LL  
NEVER EAT STALE  
PORK ON LENT  
AGAIN!

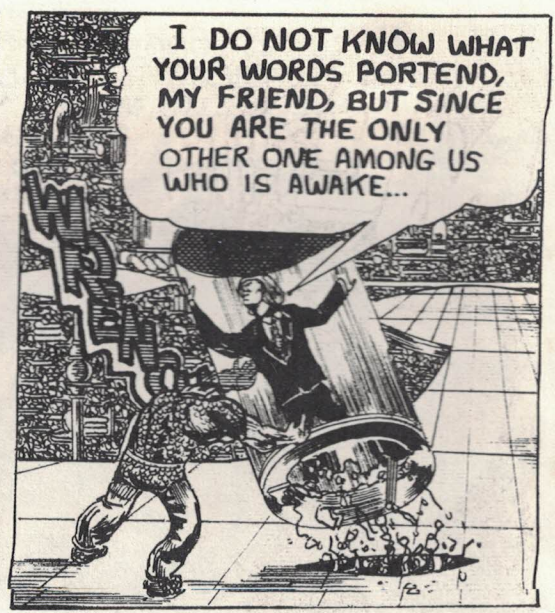
-EH?





AAA  
THIS ONE'S LOOSE!!

L--LISTEN, YOU...  
I K-KNOW THE  
GENEVA RULES  
BY HEART,  
AND--



I DO NOT KNOW WHAT  
YOUR WORDS PORTEND,  
MY FRIEND, BUT SINCE  
YOU ARE THE ONLY  
OTHER ONE AMONG US  
WHO IS AWAKE...



...AND SINCE WE  
ARE BOTH FELLOW  
PRISONERS OF SORTS,  
I AM DUTY-BOUND  
TO SET YOU FREE!

:OWW!! WATCH  
IT, WILLYA?!! THIS  
IS THE ONLY GOOD  
SUIT I BROUGHT  
ALONG!



I BELIEVE INTRODUCTIONS  
ARE IN ORDER! MY NAME IS  
BODGALVIQÛUNIARE XI-429...  
BUT FOR EXPEDIENCE, YOU  
MAY CALL ME "BOD". I HAIL  
FROM A WORLD IN THE FOURTH  
STAR QUADRANT IN SECTOR  
NINE!

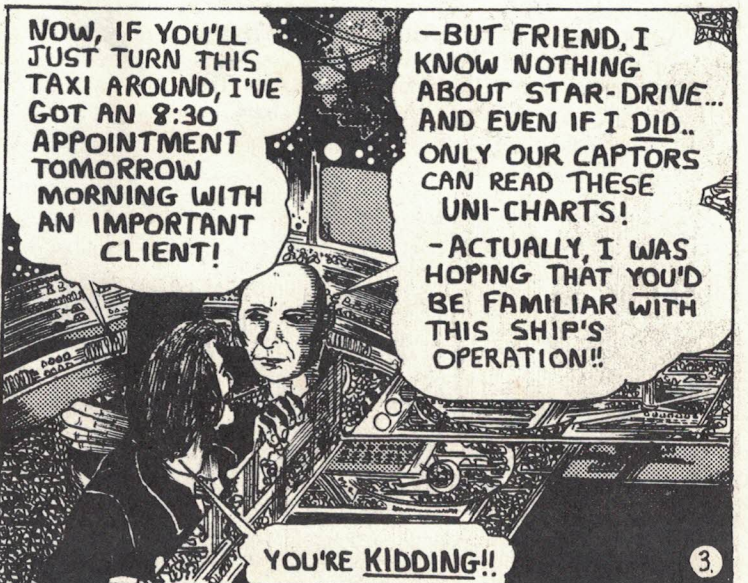
GROOVY!



AND YOU ARE ?!!?

MORT PARKER OF  
THE FOURTH-FLOOR  
OF THE TENAMENT OF  
THIRTY-THIRD AND  
RUSHMORE!

THAT'LL HAVE TO  
DO IN LIEU OF NAME,  
RANK AND SERIAL  
NUMBER!



NOW, IF YOU'LL  
JUST TURN THIS  
TAXI AROUND, I'VE  
GOT AN 8:30  
APPOINTMENT  
TOMORROW  
MORNING WITH  
AN IMPORTANT  
CLIENT!

—BUT FRIEND, I  
KNOW NOTHING  
ABOUT STAR-DRIVE...  
AND EVEN IF I DID...  
ONLY OUR CAPTORS  
CAN READ THESE  
UNI-CHARTS!

—ACTUALLY, I WAS  
HOPING THAT YOU'D  
BE FAMILIAR WITH  
THIS SHIP'S  
OPERATION!!

YOU'RE KIDDING!!



WELL... SO LONG AS WE ARE ABOUT THE TASK OF INTRODUCING OURSELVES, LET ME TELL YOU A BIT ABOUT THE WORLD I ORIGINATE FROM, AND YOU, IF YOU ARE SO MOVED, MAY RECIPROCATÉ;

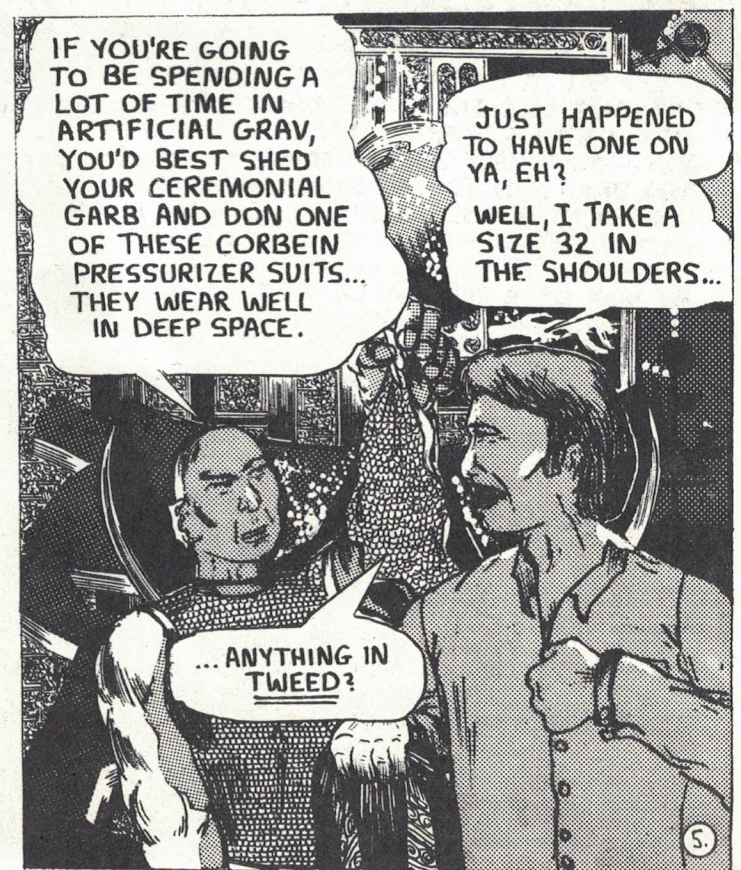
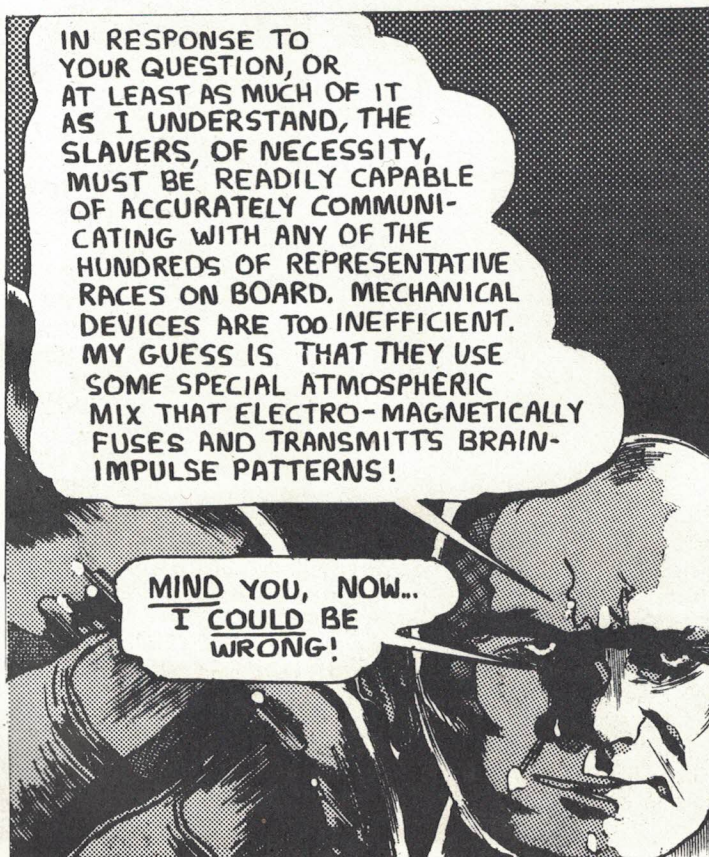
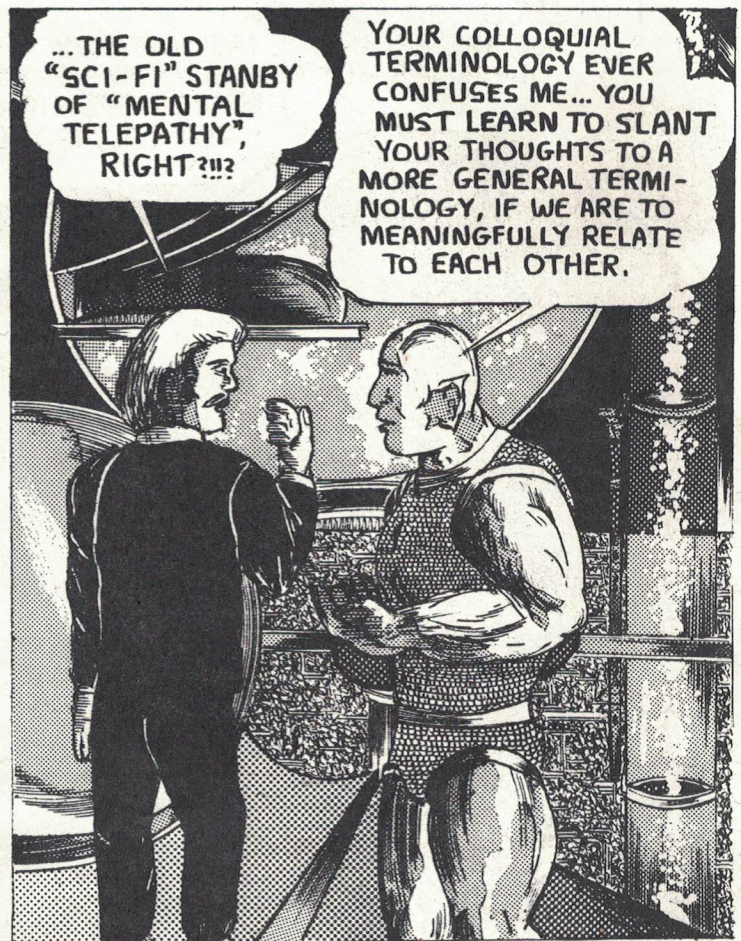
....THOUGH, ADMITTEDLY, MY LONG PERIOD OF CAPTIVITY IN SPACE HAS GIVEN ME AMPLE TIME TO PONDER MY OWN WORLD'S SPECIAL TRAGEDY, IT EVER PERPLEXES ME HOW AS FAR ADVANCED A RACE AS WE CORBEINS COULD HAVE RESPONDED TO SO CRUEL A DESTINY WITH SUCH COMPLACENCY..

...YOU SEE, A DISTANT RACE, COUNTLESS BILLIONS OF LIGHT YEARS AWAY, BECAME KNOWN TO US THROUGH THAT DESTINY, AND WOULD HAVE EVER REMAINED DETACHED AND UNKNOWN TO US... SAVE FOR THE IRRELEVANT BABBLING WE PICKED UP\* FROM THEM... AND THE HORRIBLE GENETIC IMBALANCE THEY UNWITTINGLY CREATED BY WAY OF A MYSTERIOUS RADIATION THAT WAS UNLEASHED BY THEIR WAR-WEAPONS... CONDUCTED THROUGH THE VACUUME OF SPACE... AND CONTRACTED BY MY RACE, LIKE A PANDEMIC BACTERIA!

...PHYSIOLOGICALLY, WE CORBEINS WERE ONCE VERY CLOSE TO YOUR MAKEUP, MORT PARKER... PERHAPS THIS IS WHY I FEEL SOMETHING CLOSE TO KINSHIP WITH YOU NOW... BUT THE GENETIC IMBALANCE CAUSED OUR EVOLUTION TO SPEED UP FRANTICALLY... SOME OF OUR NEWBORN WERE THROWN BACKS... OTHERS FUTURISTIC MUTATES... ONLY THROUGH CAREFULLY-TOOLED, CAREFULLY PLANNED ADVANCES IN THE EUGENIC SCIENCES WERE WE ABLE TO SALVAGE WHAT WAS LEFT OF OUR RACE. WE BECAME SKILLED IN THE SELECTIVE BREEDING OF VARIOUS GROUPS OF WORKERS AND THINKERS... TO THE EXTENT THAT WHAT WERE ONCE VOCATIONS BECAME RACES! WE GAINED IMMORTALITY... AT THE EXPENSE OF LOSING THE JOY OF PROCREATION FOREVER! THE ULTIMATE CURSE!

\*THROUGH RECEIVING DEVICES, POSSIBLY EQUIVALENT TO EARTH'S RADIO-TELESCOPES.



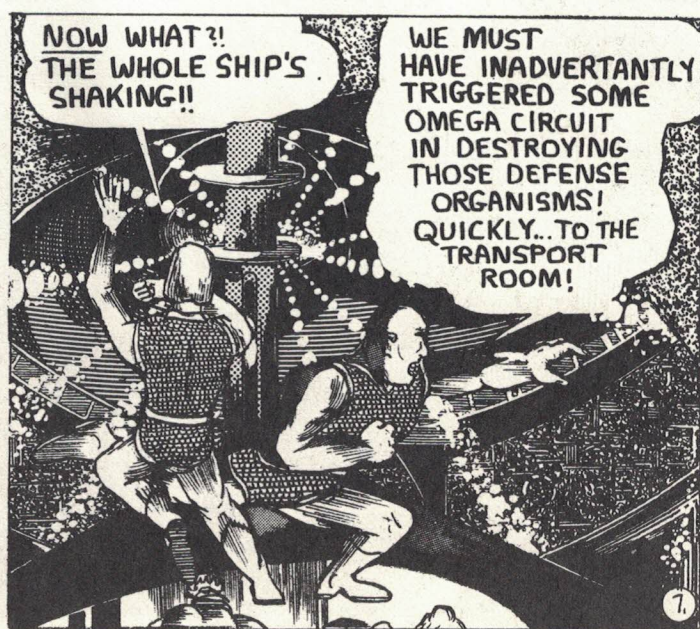
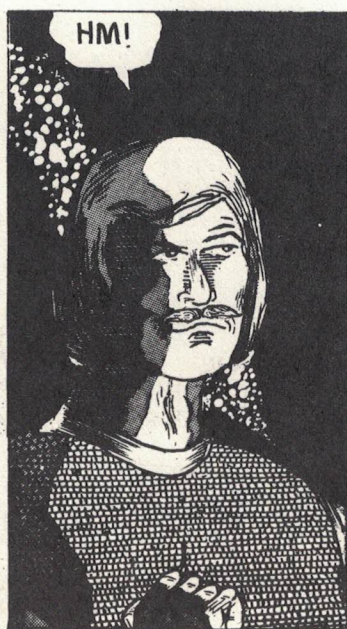
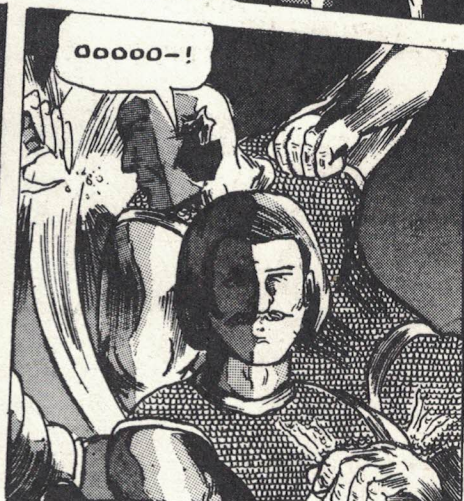
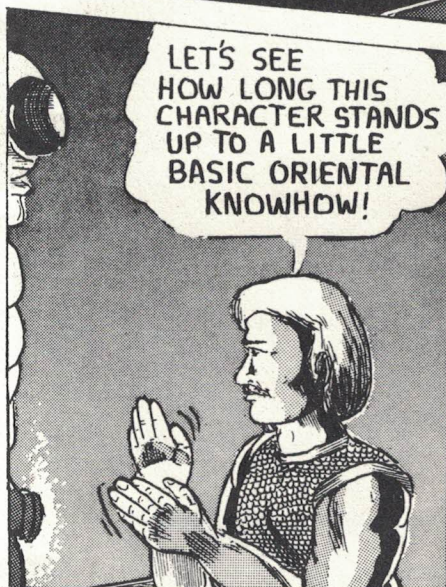




A bit later..





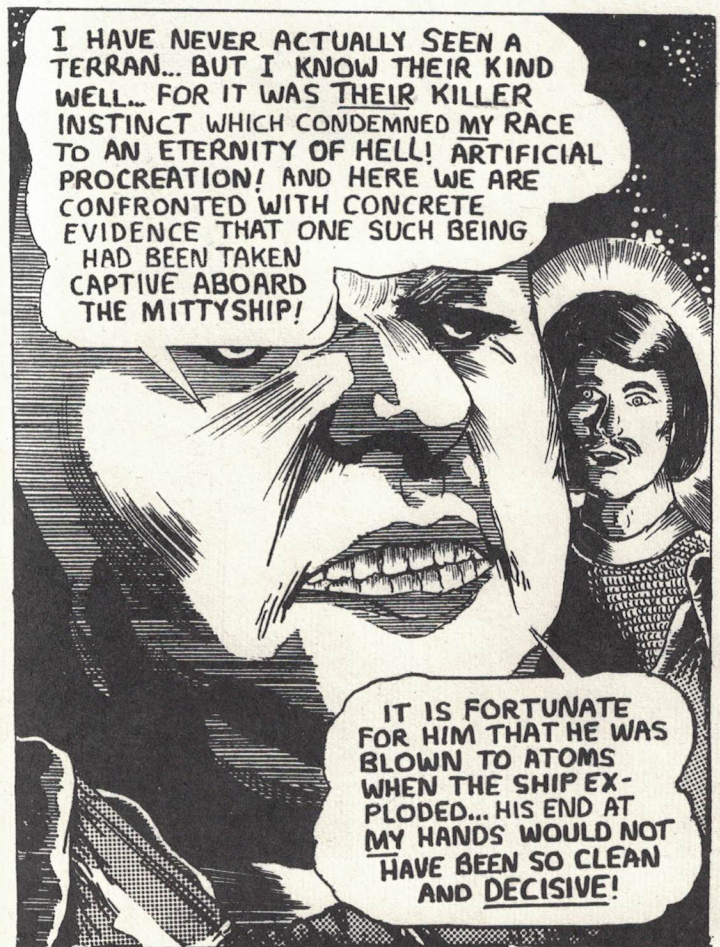
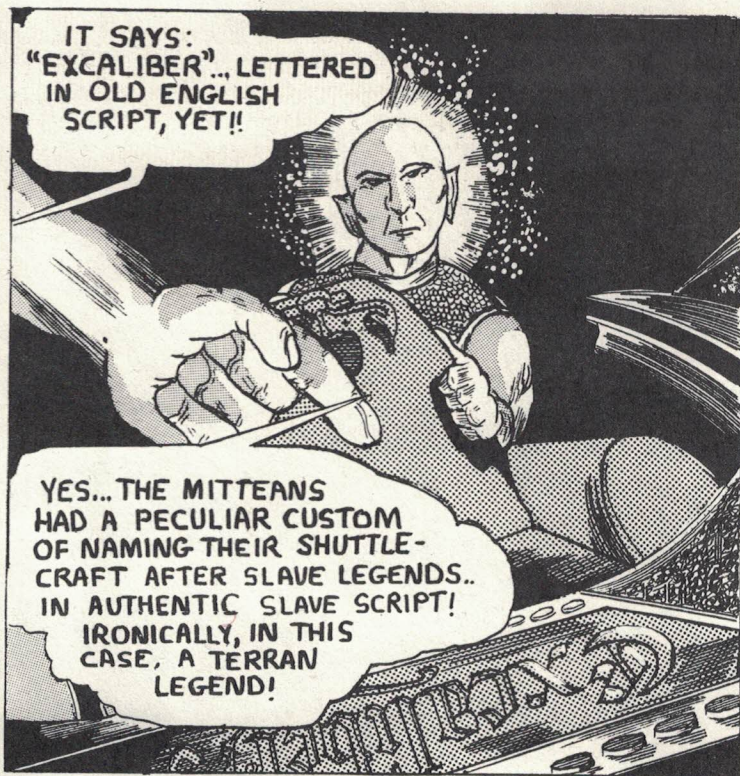
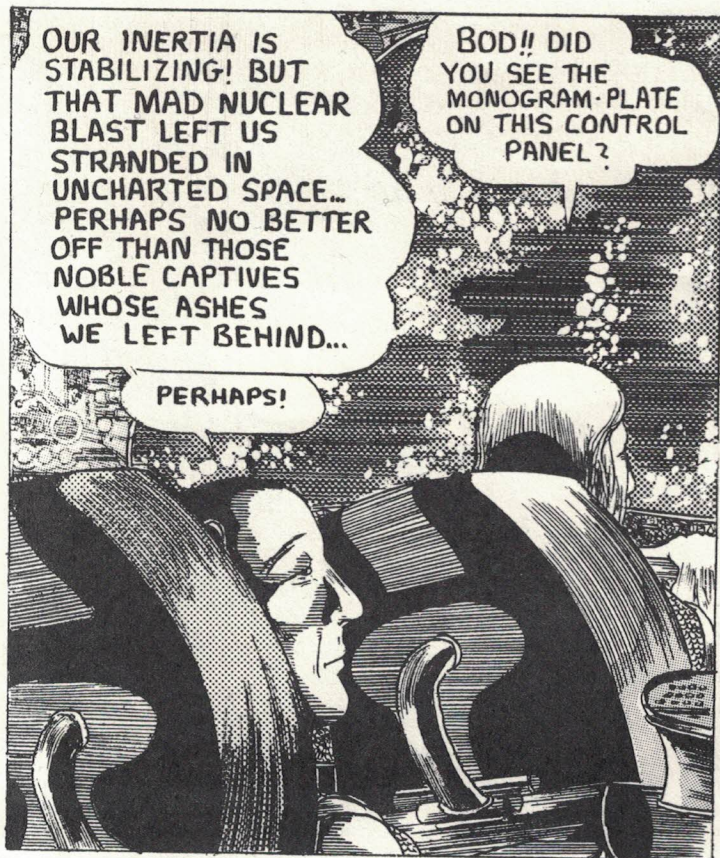




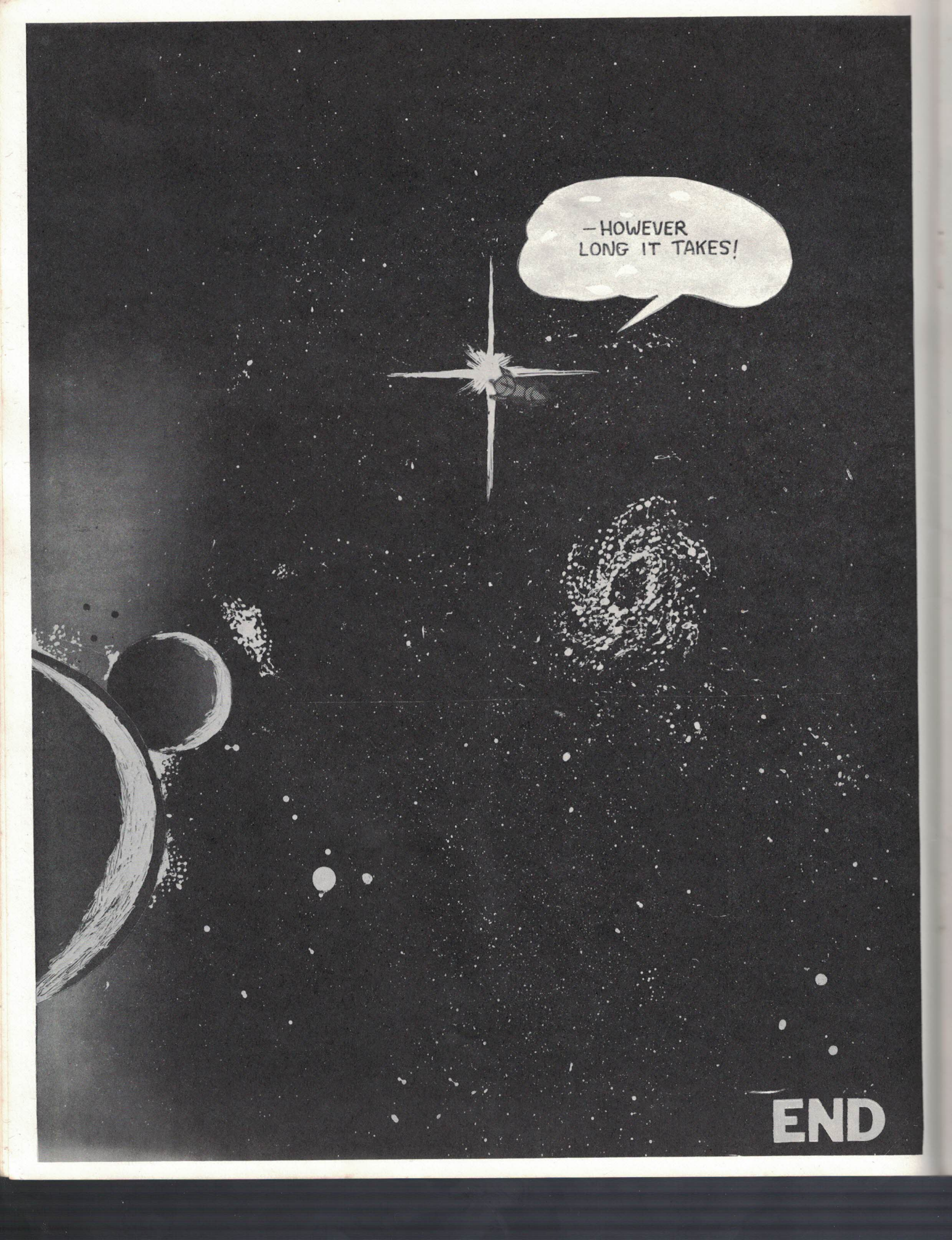




# Excaliber







—HOWEVER  
LONG IT TAKES!

**END**



# STARGAZERS

You'll forgive the agate-sized type, we hope, but it was regrettably necessary to do things this way in order to jam everything we had to say into the right space. I don't know who it was who initiated the policy of having a page of required editorial text in magazines such as this one, but we don't necessarily subscribe to it..even though admittedly there are certain facts we wanted somehow to bring to your attention in this particular edition. One of those facts deals with the temporary nature of this rather ambitious project: this is a pilot book, to gauge reader response to a new and somewhat revolutionary kind of comic. Actually, we prefer to think of Excaliber as a kind of illustrated novel; a logical extension to a much abused and overstated art form, perhaps more closely related to television than to literature. We took a page from Richard Corben's textbook and coupled it with some of the more interesting literary trends explored by Marvel-Timely, and came up with an interesting, popularized comics style, which we hope will be favorably received by comics fans and non-fans as well. Like the famous J.A.R. of the underground circuit, who SIUE students know well, we do not deal in explicatives, and prefer to remain remotely detached from the stories themselves. There is no way to take comics seriously, unless you are either a collector or an art major. All men, though, have a need to fantimize, to explore uncharted and dangerous regions through vicarious means. Knowing this, then, our goal is more to explore hitherto-untapped veins of a rich, literary resource...that bastardized form of writing known as science fiction...and to emerge with new slants on old themes, a new relevance.

Your host, admittedly, is a writer in an artist's costume, but enjoys working in art almost as he does pounding a typewriter. Working up this strip as a sideline in an already overcrowded timetable, it has so far taken him over two months to get half the book done. A firm commitment will not be made until all the votes from prospective readers are in, but your host assures you that a book of this nature could conceivably be put together a lot faster, were full attention given to it on a full-time basis; say, bi-monthly. But, he assures us, there will have to be a very definite response from a very real audience before this book can become a reality. In other words, if you read it and you like it enough to want to see more of the same...for God's sake write when you can, and let us know what you think of Excaliber. We even gave this page a nice, simple, conventional title so you won't be embarrassed addressing the envelope for your note.

In all probability, your mailman will think you're writing to Jean Dixon.

If the response is good, we'll turn all of our future editorial pages over to reader forum, as a constructive means of exchanging ideas and con-

cepts. Stands to reason that, since this is going to be a book slanted towards a mass audience, that audience should have a voice in the kinds of art and stories that go into it. With us, you have an added advantage, since we're working on a limited budget with limited resources. Since we're quite anxious to have your business, we're just as anxious to find ways of pleasing you. Uh, of course, since we're not underground, we'll have to kind of cool the sex a bit..sorry, guys. But aside from that, anything goes, as far as we're concerned.

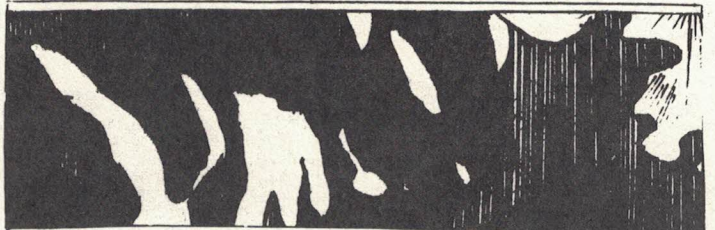
Incidentally, while we're about doing acknowledgements, I'd like to personally thank good ole Charlie Pitts from Granite for acting as advisor to this first edition, and to wish him luck in his underground endeavor. Of course, with help from J.A.R. himself, there isn't much luck involved. We'd like to extend an open invitation to Pitts to lend us his adroit pen whenever the mood strikes him, because his art is great..truly food to the eye. We'd also like to thank his buddy Mr. Butch B. for devoting his time and attention to the script for the opening installment of Excaliber, even though his fantastic illustrations were withdrawn at the last moment. We wish Butch luck in whatever he's trying to get away with down in Florida, and with his own strip, Phiddeas Phoom, which your host wrote the script for. Uh, sorry, but the explicatives snuck in by accident. It's just that when you have an opportunity to consort with talent of the caliber of these gentlemen (or is it Ex-caliber?) you become somewhat sensitive to their enthusiasm. The brainstorming sessions at Larry's in Belleville had a lot to do with the eventual initiation of this project, guys. I hope you enjoy it too.

All of this back-patting and in-blabbing is boring, boring, boring..to write as well as to read, so we'll dispense with it. One final note, though, before we go on..in this area particularly, there are a group of incredibly talented art affectionados which I would personally like to invite into the fold, to get the greatest variety of art styles possible. Among those who are proficient in the medium are talented Thomas Hohn, who would fill this prescription quite nicely, a nomadic romanticist named Duane Robinson, who was last seen meditating on a waterbed at the Apocalypse, and hostile Ed Savage, who feels, like an awful lot of us do, that prices for collector's editions have gotten out of hand. Your host last collaborated with Tom Hohn on the Antiman, which we're seriously considering doing a revival of.

As for our current intentions regarding a certain space odyssey, they've already been mentioned, but can be boiled down briefly into two well marked words: to entertain. We hope we have stumbled onto a formula that you'll enjoy, and want to see more of. Your interest, not to mention your money, is greatly appreciated.

The address, if you have any thoughts you'd like to share with us, is: 9 West Koesterer St., Freeburg, Illinois, 62243, curiously enough.

More of this later.





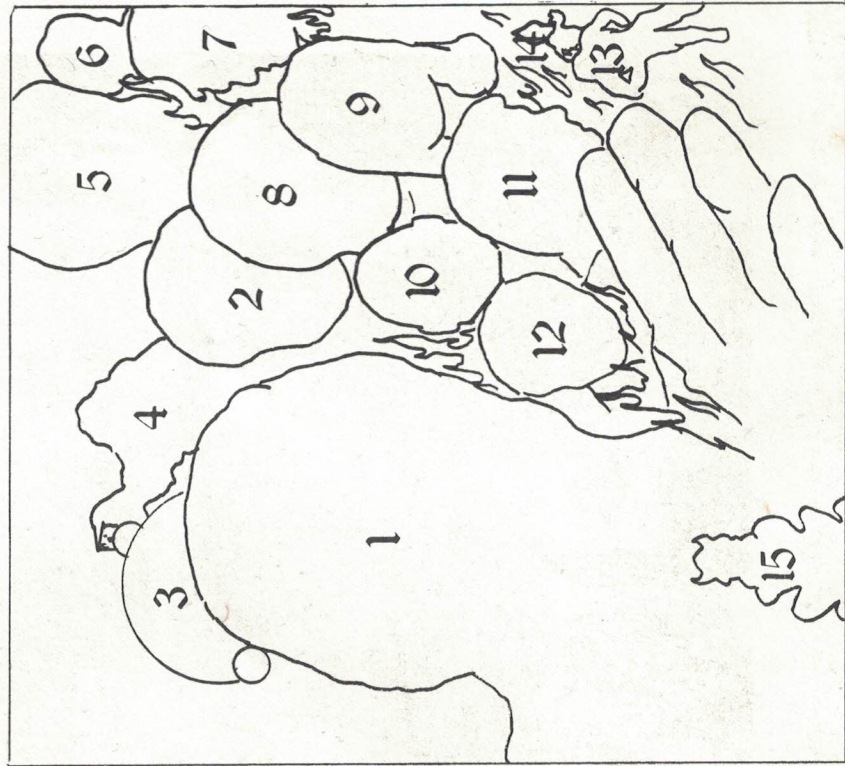
**PORTRAITS IN OBSCURITY # 5**







Now, here's a little game everyone can play. It's called pin the tail on the unknown author. As you will observe, the above sketch contains not only Paul himself, but just about every literary creation and comics character he's ever developed. You may have a bit of difficulty picking out your own favorites, since very little of Cordel's work has ever been published. In fact, the book you're now holding is the first collection of art and fiction ever formally published. From time to time, you'll probably be seeing some of these characters popping in and out of the series, since name-dropping is one of Cordel's favorite pastimes. The schematic diagram at the right tells all:



1. The ole massah hisself, formerly a student at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Ill. where he majored in Journalism and minored in (of all things) sociology. Now currently working for the St. Louis Globe Democrat under another name.
2. Cordel's focal creation, Mark Benton, main protagonist in the "Resurrection Trilogy", all about messianistic and millinestic movements and a man who died before his predestined time.
3. Benton's romantic interest (in a sense) Nancy Morris.
4. The Antichrist.
5. Martin Taylor, government agent and brash adventurer, one of Benton's acquaintances; a central figure in the activities of his followers following his death.
6. Nancy's brother David, who disavowed his material life and became a prophet.
7. Pollonious, an anti-war activist ahead of his time.
8. Earnest Havingale of the first "Phoenix" adventure.
9. Petulia Dennings of "Phoenix" 10. A co-creation of Cordel and Tom Hohn.
11. The Antiman.
12. Phoenix, nameless, faceless assassin for the

(continued on back inside cover.)



Your humble Host went rummaging all through his files last week, seeking choice quotations to supplement this general information page from nationally renowned media expert Edmund Carpenter, but to no avail; apparently someone cleaned up the joint since last meeting. So instead, here is a short quote from an article by Dan Carlsinsky of the New York Times:

"Comic book collecting has been growing slowly but steadily since the series of nostalgia waves began in the middle 1960s. Today, serious - not to say obsessive - collectors who analyze stories, criticize their art work, and even examine the binding staples, have created a full-fledged market, with all the trimmings: conventions where buyers and sellers meet, numerous trade journals (called "fanzines") and hundreds of dealers.

"The bulk of the comic book market is made via mail order, but in most big cities you can buy over-the-counter from a shopkeeper. One such man is Edward Summer, a bearded, pony-tailed 26-year-old filmmaker. Summer is owner of the Supersnipe Comic Art Emporium of New York City.

"...Summer said, "There is a tremendous revival in comic books and the industry is producing a lot of what I believe will be important comic books. So it's good to stockpile."

To which we might add, after having poured over the current Overstreet a dozen or two dozen times, the two recent mags that have

accrued the most monetary value in the shortest amount of time are the two new Kirby books from National, Demon (#1, Aug., 1972, Mint condition priced at \$1.00) and Kamandi, (#1, Oct., 1972, Mint condition priced at .40) though frankly, we expected the latter to have accrued more, and good ole Swamp Thing by Wrightson, (#1, Nov. 1972 Mint condition priced at \$1.00.) also a National book.

On a more personal note, the original art from this auspicious issue of Excaliber will be exhibited in St. Louis at the mini-con to be held at the Gateway Hotel July 13th. Too bad the mag itself isn't coming out until August. Oh, well.. we think we enjoyed it.

By the way, since we're not quite non-profit... (even though we're getting closer to it all the time) we're going to offer original art to our readers for sale on a very limited basis. This offer will begin with the second issue, though. Art from the debut edition is not for sale. If we come under too heavy critical fire, we may be forced to suspend the offer, but we'll try once and see.

In the future, this page will be devoted solely to serious criticism of the comix medium, using both quotes and commentary from national sources and fanzines alike. Obviously, we believe in the medium..otherwise, we wouldn't have gone to the trouble of putting the book together to start with. We'll be discussing both underground and over-the-counter comic mags..and maybe, if luck is really with us, we'll find that blasted quote from Carpenter. Who knows?

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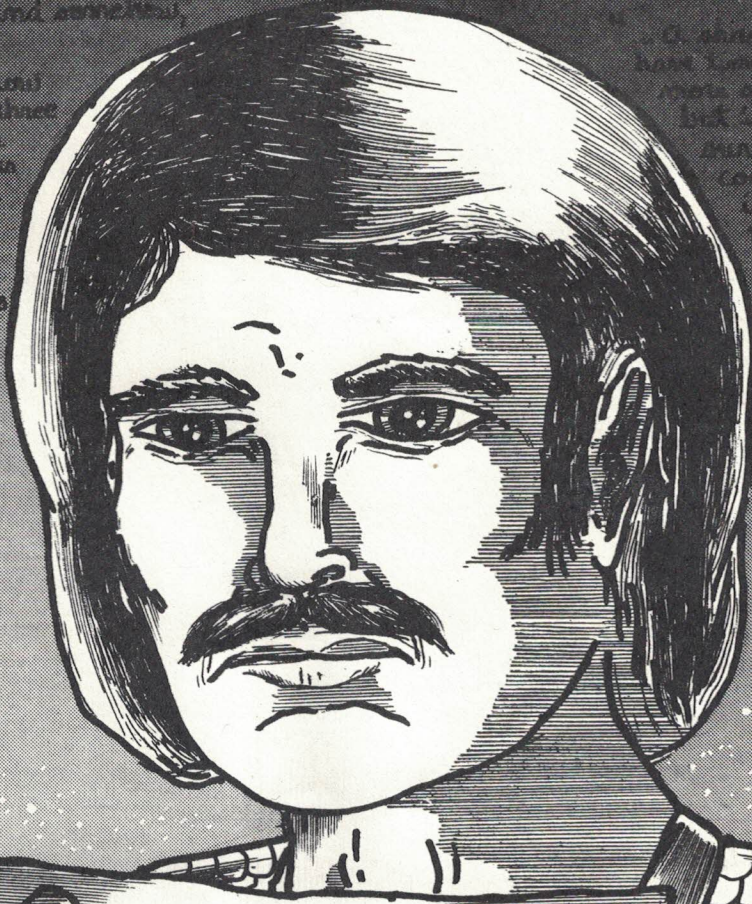
# EXCALIBUR

a space odyssey

"I write these words with a pencil... my last earthly possession... in order that I may be able to take... in the hope that someone, somewhere, sometime, will be able to decipher it... and somehow, understand."

"The time is now 0.400 hours... three hours since the shuttlecraft was ejected from the mothership. The corbin I am traveling with is asleep; he comes from a world that revolves rapidly, so that days and nights are respectively six hours long."

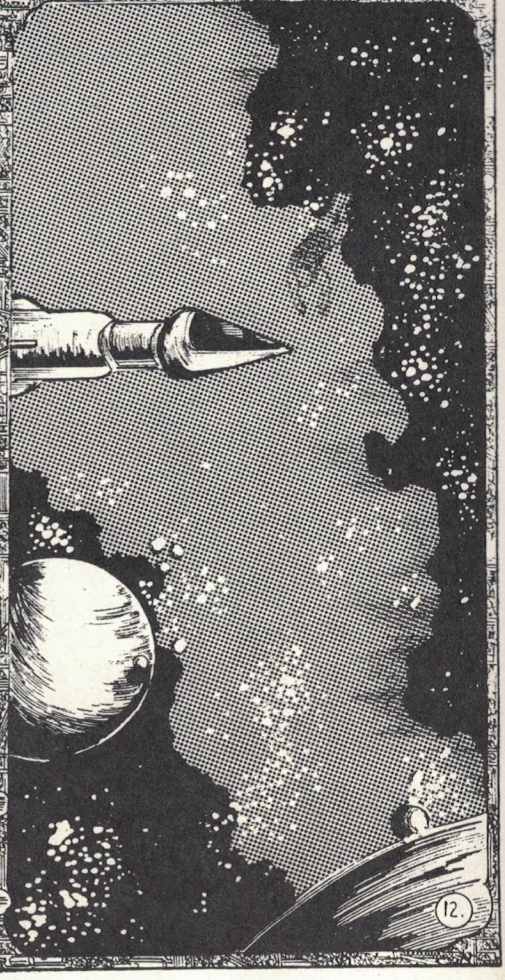
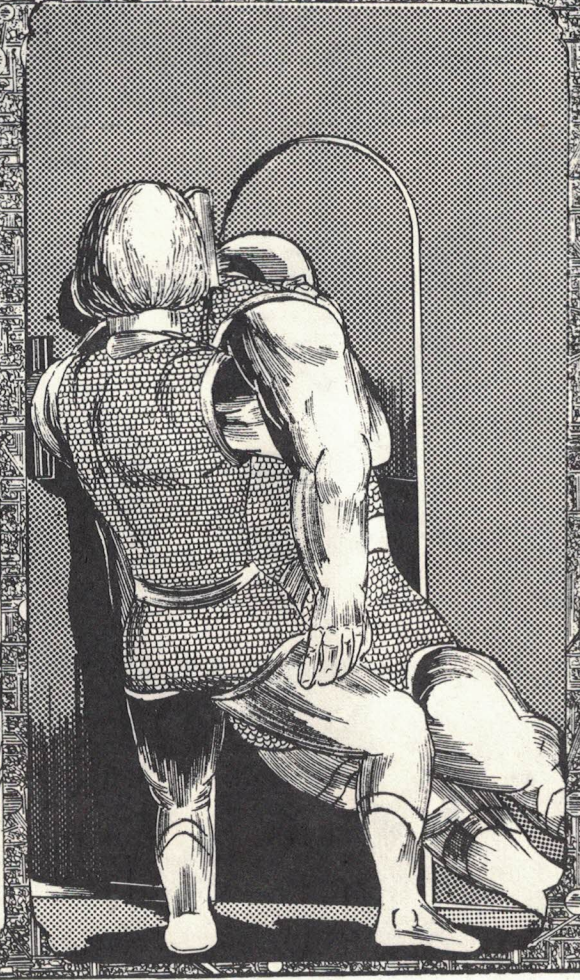
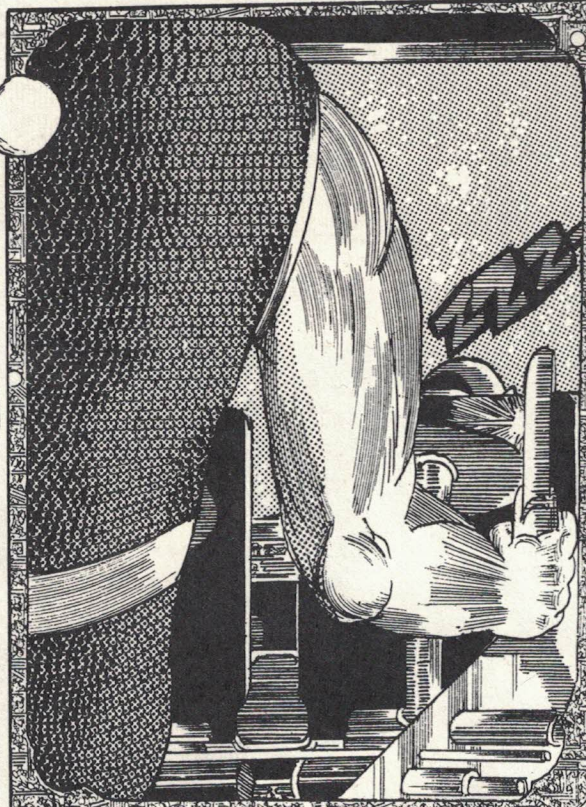
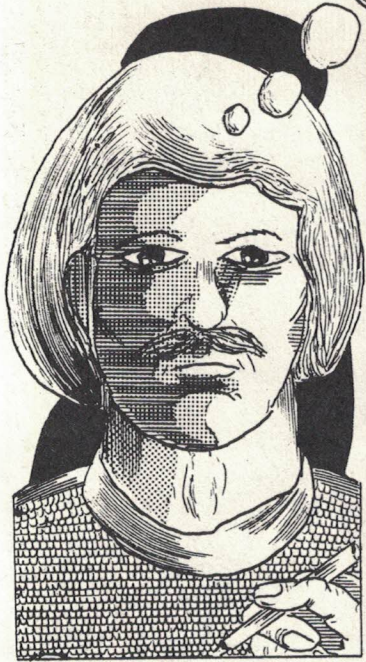
"A shame I didn't have time to learn more about him... but if I am to survive, my course of action is clear. He will never know the secret which would have placed me at his mercy!"



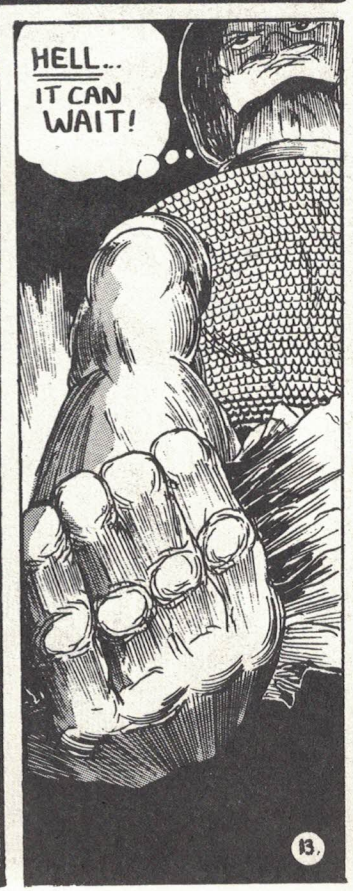
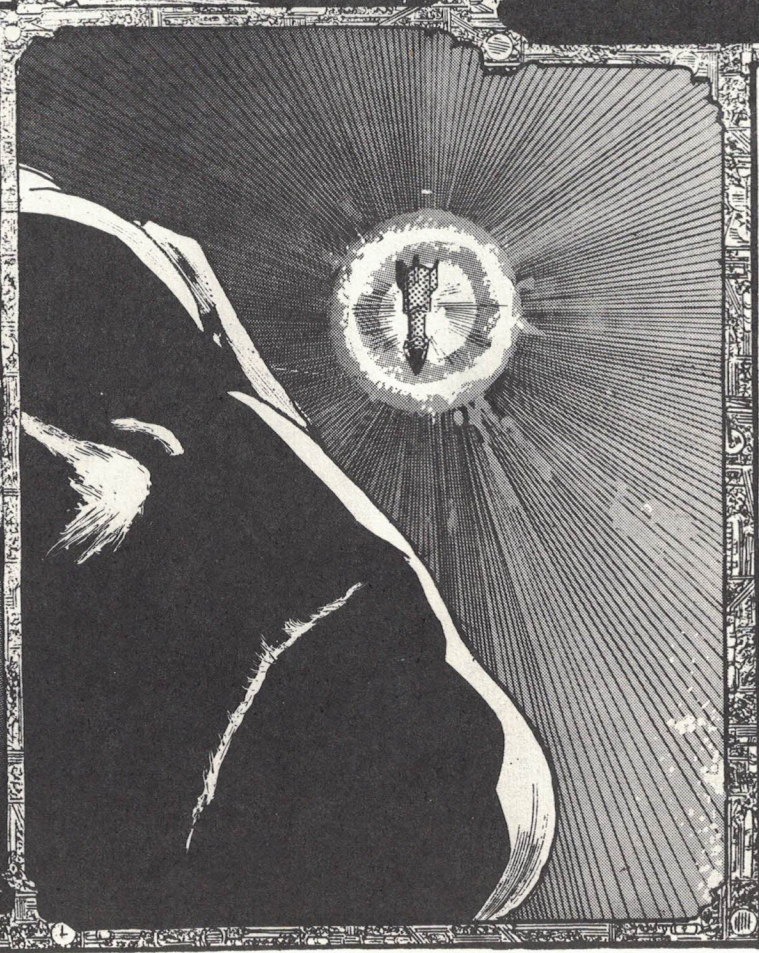
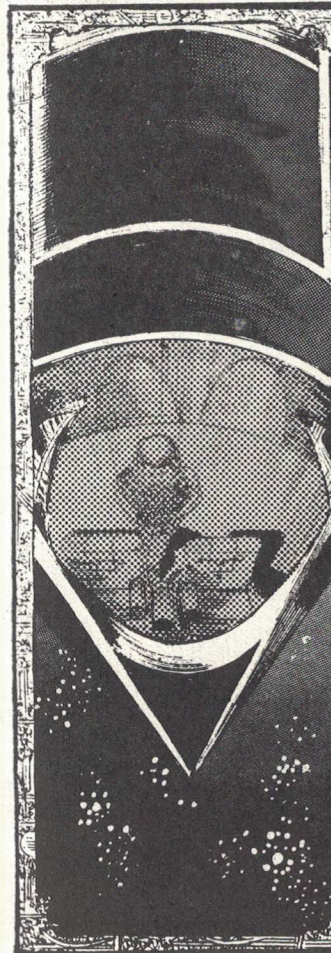
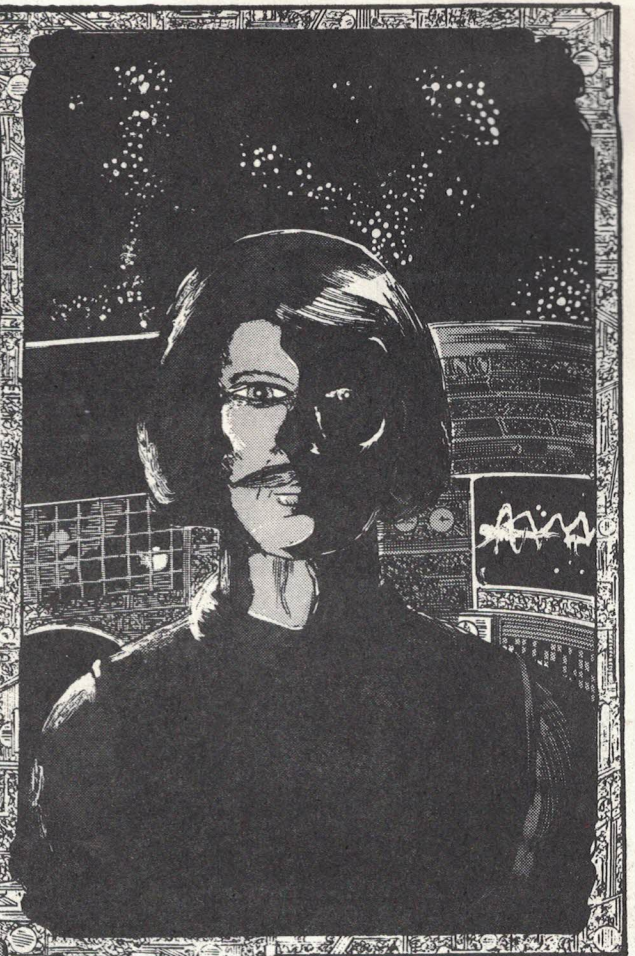
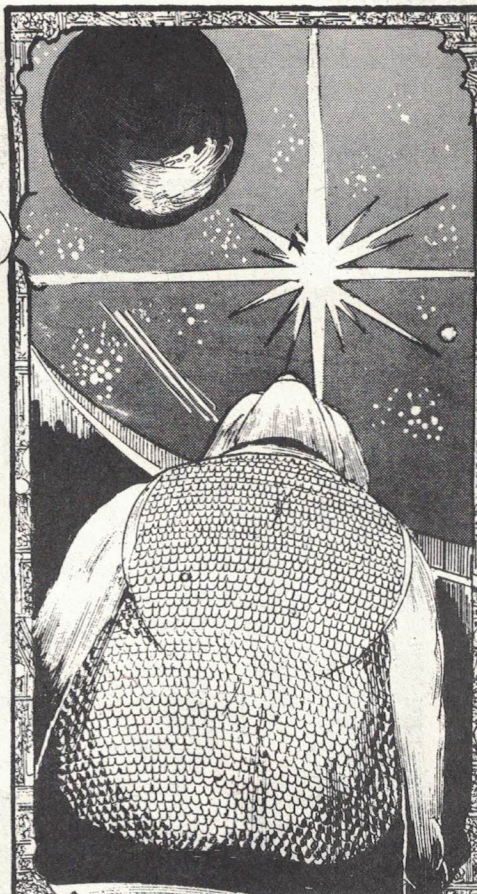
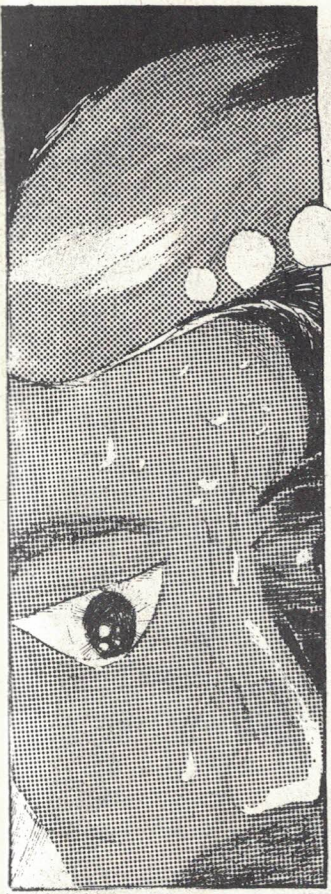
# THE SCREAMING STAR

paul m. cordel













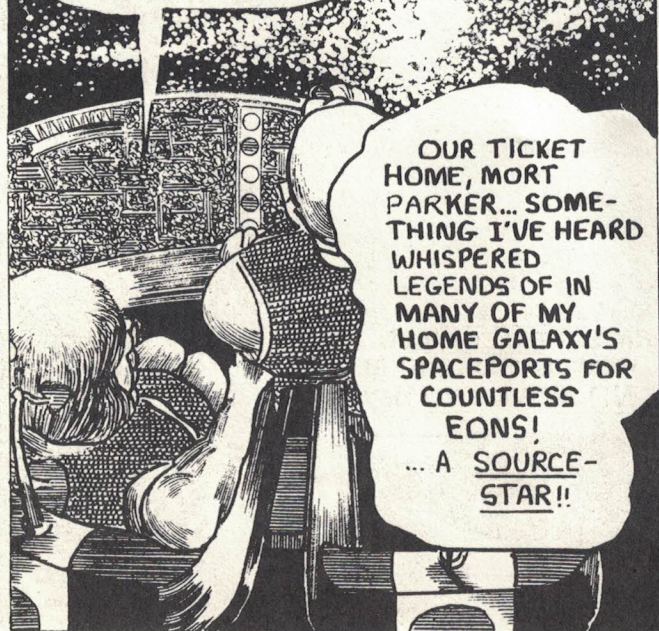
HE'S STARTING TO WAKE UP! I'LL HAVE TO EAT THIS BLASTED ENTRY I WROTE TO KEEP HIM FROM READING IT! IF HE CAN RECOGNIZE A PHONETIC STRUCTURE FOR OLD ENGLISH \*"TERRAN" HE'LL SEE IT IN MY HANDWRITING AS WELL!

YAWN!!!

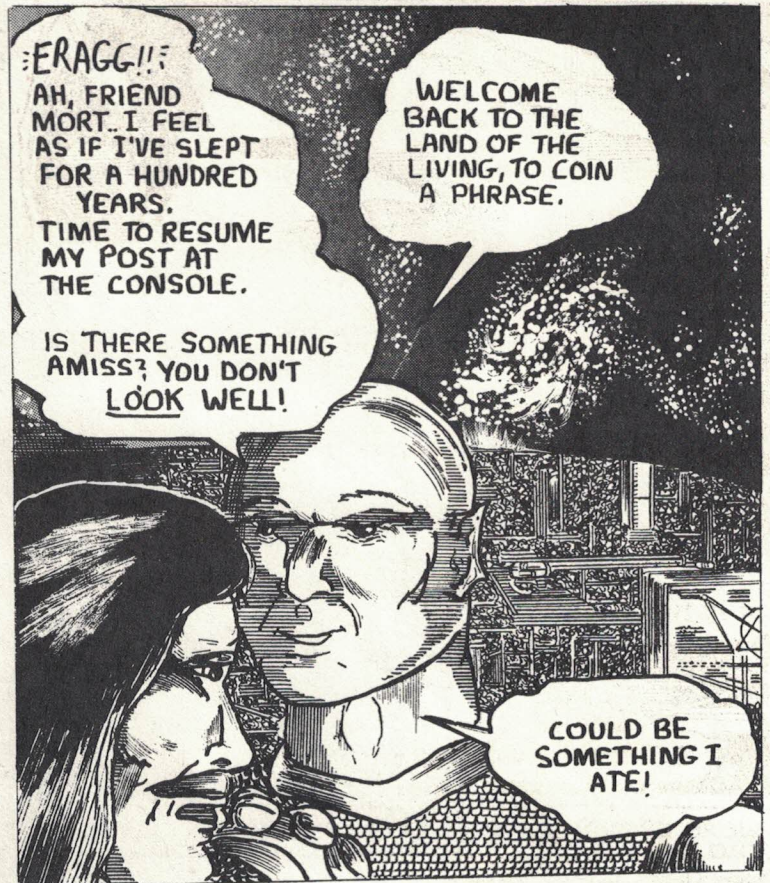
URPPP: THIS STUFF'S AWFUL!! HOPE IT ISN'T POISONOUS!

\* IF YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE TWO UNFORTUNATE PEOPLE IN THE CIVILIZED WESTERN WORLD WHO LIKE TO START READING A BOOK IN THE MIDDLE, PROGRESSING IN BOTH DIRECTIONS AT ONCE, WE REFER YOU TO PAGES 4 AND 9 FOR FURTHER EXPLANATION.  
-Helpful Host.

JUST WHAT IS IT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, PREY TELL?



OUR TICKET HOME, MORT PARKER... SOMETHING I'VE HEARD WHISPERED LEGENDS OF IN MANY OF MY HOME GALAXY'S SPACEPORTS FOR COUNTLESS EONS! ... A SOURCE-STAR!!

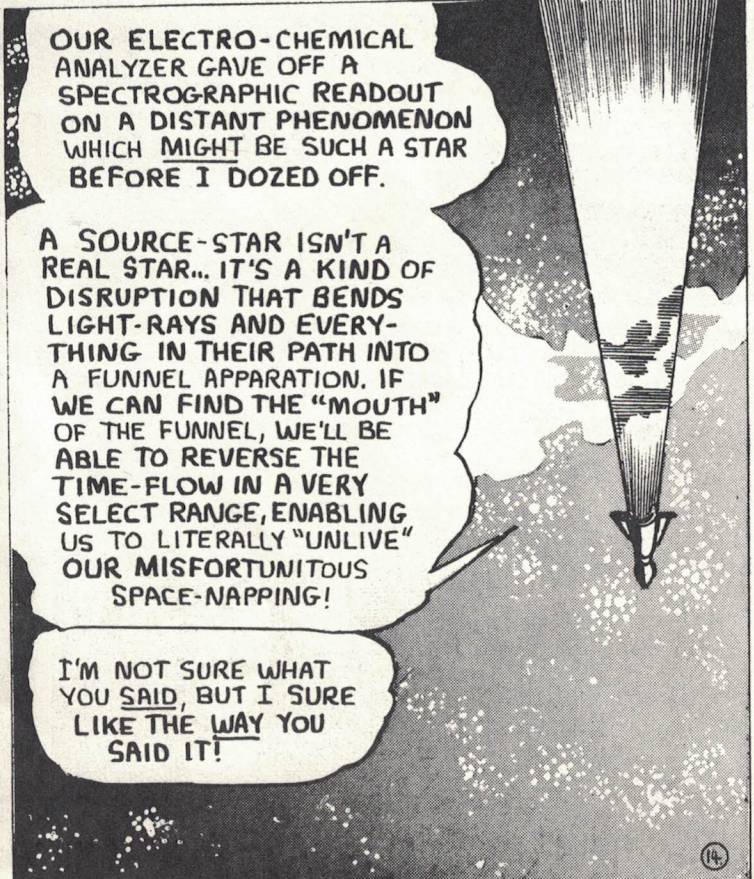


ERAGG!!!  
AH, FRIEND MORT. I FEEL AS IF I'VE SLEPT FOR A HUNDRED YEARS. TIME TO RESUME MY POST AT THE CONSOLE.

WELCOME BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING, TO COIN A PHRASE.

IS THERE SOMETHING AMISS? YOU DON'T LOOK WELL!

COULD BE SOMETHING I ATE!



OUR ELECTRO-CHEMICAL ANALYZER GAVE OFF A SPECTROGRAPHIC READOUT ON A DISTANT PHENOMENON WHICH MIGHT BE SUCH A STAR BEFORE I DOZED OFF.

A SOURCE-STAR ISN'T A REAL STAR... IT'S A KIND OF DISRUPTION THAT BENDS LIGHT-RAYS AND EVERYTHING IN THEIR PATH INTO A FUNNEL APPARATION. IF WE CAN FIND THE "MOUTH" OF THE FUNNEL, WE'LL BE ABLE TO REVERSE THE TIME-FLOW IN A VERY SELECT RANGE, ENABLING US TO LITERALLY "UNLIVE" OUR MISFORTUNITOUS SPACE-NAPPING!

I'M NOT SURE WHAT YOU SAID, BUT I SURE LIKE THE WAY YOU SAID IT!





IS IT THE-

I THINK NOT-

- BUT IF WE  
DEVIATE FROM OUR  
PRESENT COURSE  
OR OUR PRESENT  
RATE OF TRAVEL  
ONE IOTA, OUR  
CALCULATIONS  
WILL BE ALTERED...  
AND WE'LL LOSE  
THAT PRICELESS  
OPPORTUNITY  
FOREVER...

FOR, WE WERE  
LUCKY TO HAVE  
FOCUSED ONTO  
THIS SOURCE-  
STAR WITH THE  
LIMITED FACILITIES  
WE HAVE ON BOARD  
THIS CRAFT...  
AND OUR SPEED IS  
LIMITED, SINCE  
WE ARE NOT EQUIPPED  
WITH STAR-DRIVE.

Shortly after...

THERE'S  
SOMETHING  
UP AHEAD!

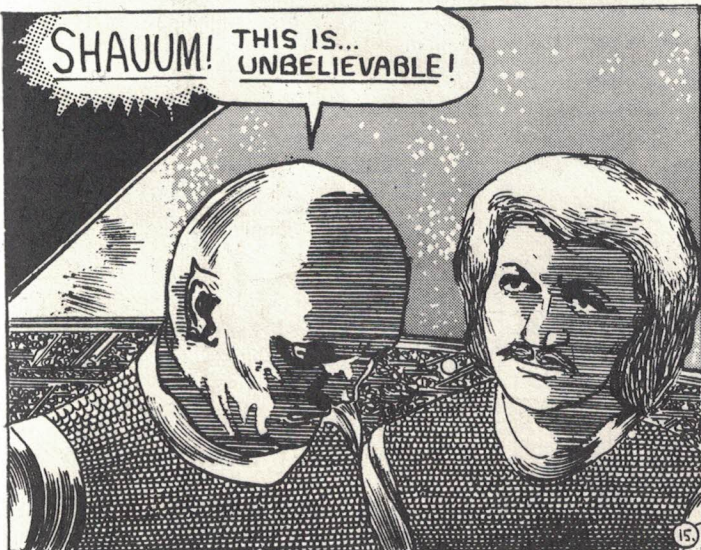
I SEE IT!

WE'RE UPON IT MUCH  
TOO SOON IF IT IS.

HMF!  
LOOKS LIKE  
A GALECTIC  
BOWLING-BALL!

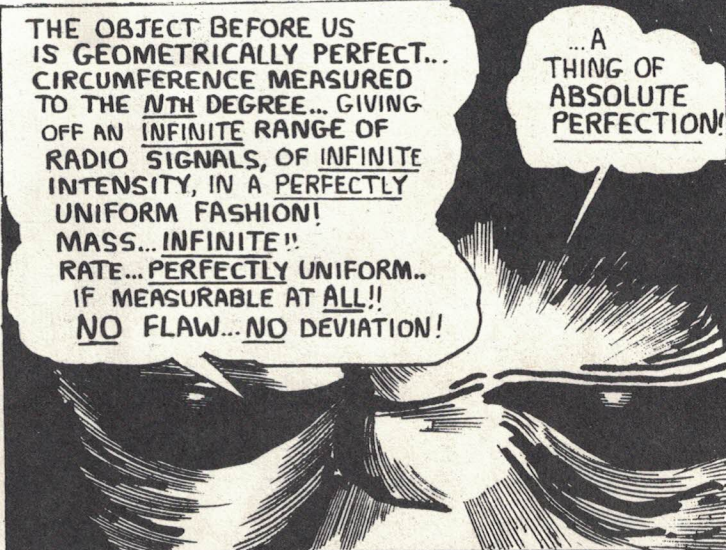
COULD BE A STRAY  
SATELLITE... I'M CHECKING  
CALIBRATIONS NOW.

SHAUUM! THIS IS...  
UNBELIEVABLE!

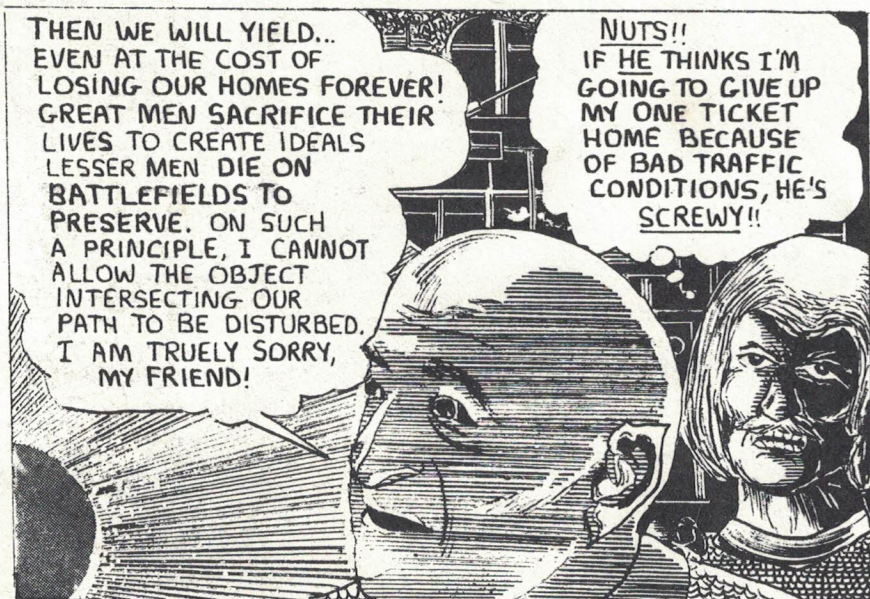
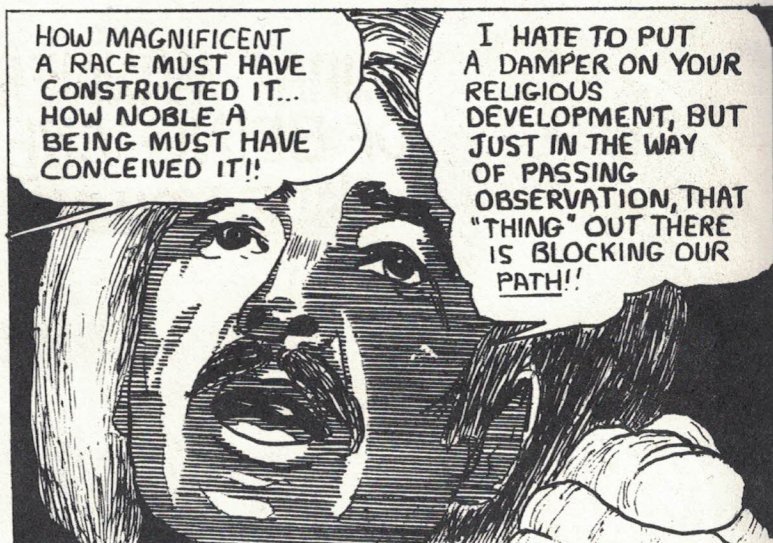


THE OBJECT BEFORE US  
IS GEOMETRICALLY PERFECT...  
CIRCUMFERENCE MEASURED  
TO THE NTH DEGREE... GIVING  
OFF AN INFINITE RANGE OF  
RADIO SIGNALS, OF INFINITE  
INTENSITY, IN A PERFECTLY  
UNIFORM FASHION!  
MASS... INFINITE!!  
RATE... PERFECTLY UNIFORM..  
IF MEASURABLE AT ALL!!  
NO FLAW...NO DEVIATION!

...A  
THING OF  
ABSOLUTE  
PERFECTION!





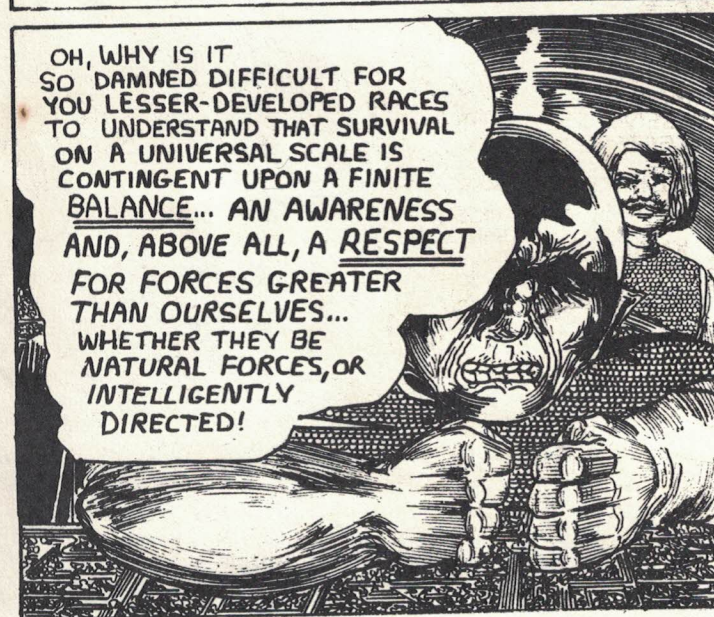
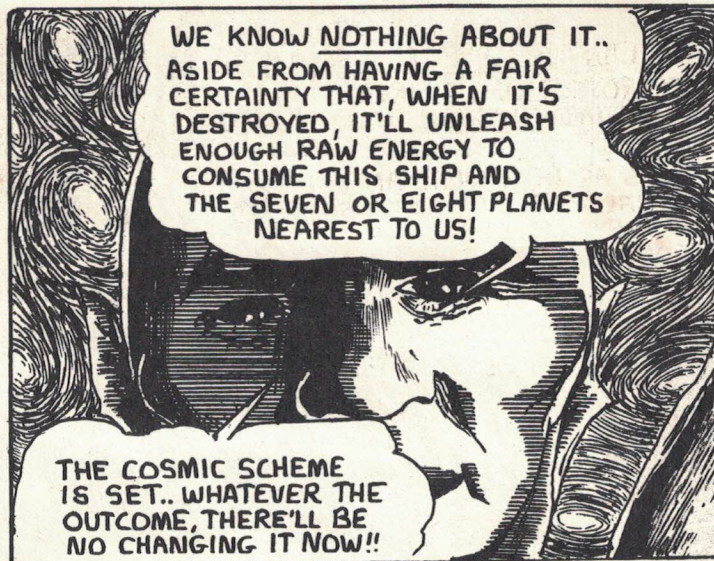




WHAT MANNER  
OF BEING ARE YOU?!!?  
HAVE YOU NO RESPECT  
FOR LIFE-FORMS OTHER  
THAN YOUR OWN?!!









I--I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!  
THE PROJECTILE WE FIRED  
IS PASSING THROUGH THAT  
SPHERE...

... IT'S AS IF IT WERE AN  
ACTUAL PHYSICAL EXTENSION  
OF THE TIME-SPACE  
CONTINUUM!!

WELL, LOVELY...  
BUT HOW ARE  
HUMAN  
PASSENGERS  
AFFECTED?!!?

WE'LL KNOW  
IN A MOMENT!!

I KNEW I  
SHOULDN'T HAVE  
ASKED!!

AMAZING!!  
WE PASSED THROUGH  
IT WITH NO  
PHYSIOLOGICAL  
DAMAGE OR  
SIDE-EFFECT!  
...AND WITHOUT  
LOSING A MOMENT  
OF PRECIOUS  
TIME!!

TRULY A  
DESTINY THAT  
NEITHER OF  
US CAN  
FATHOM HAS  
FAVORED  
US!

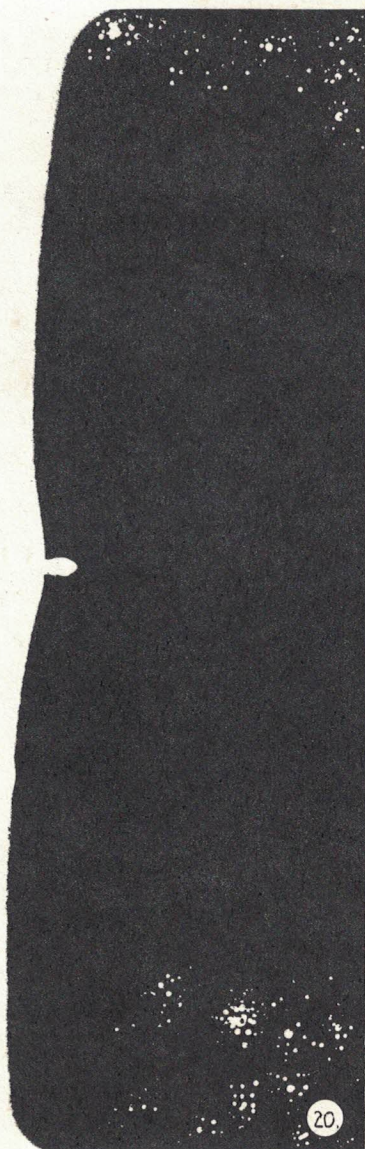
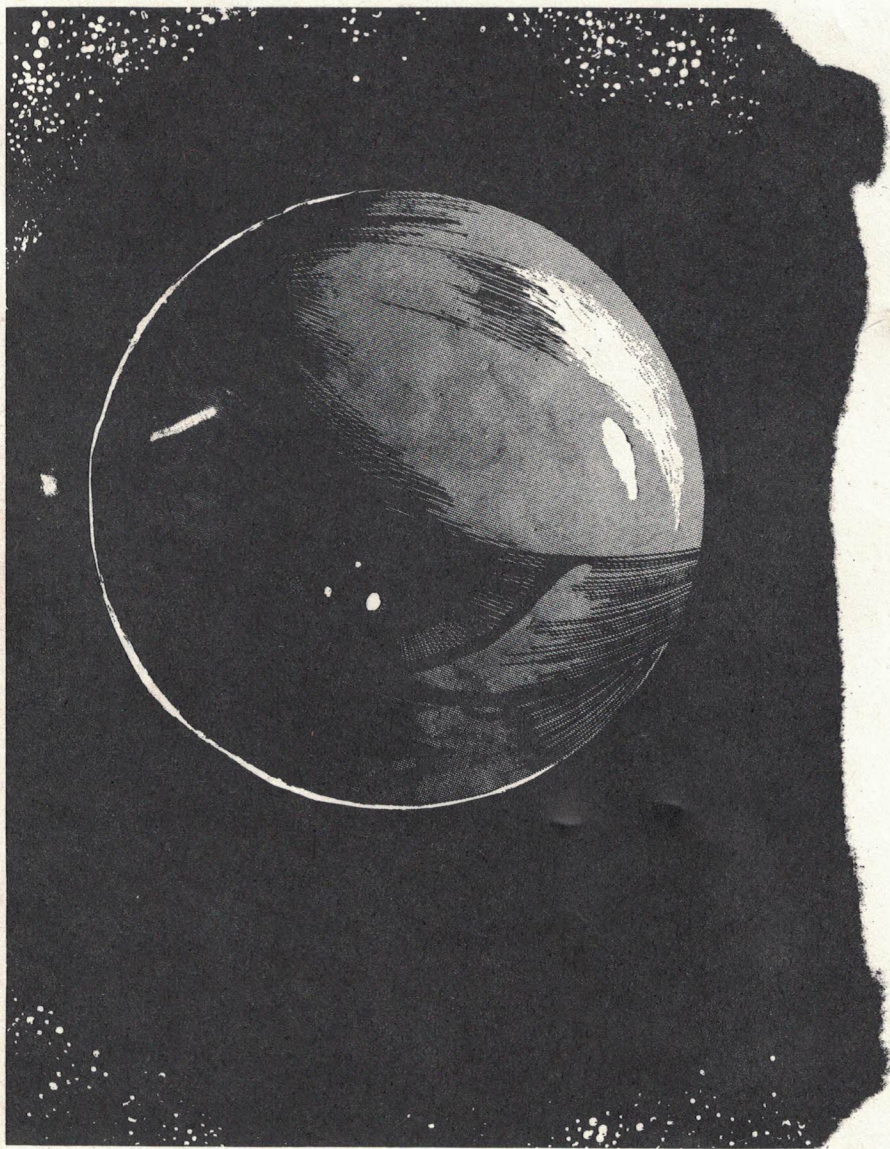
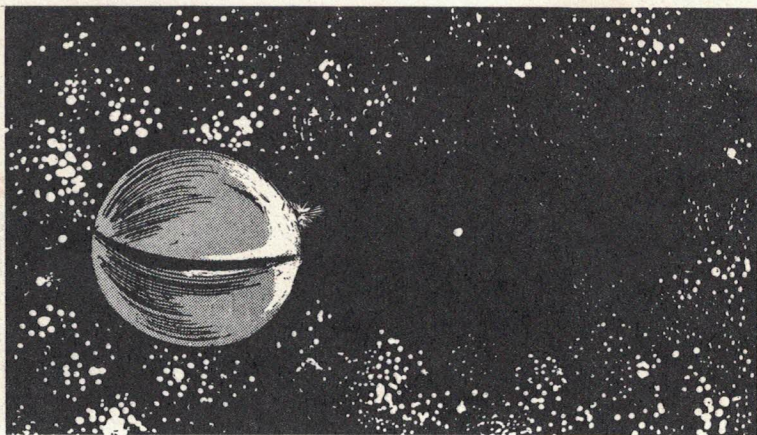
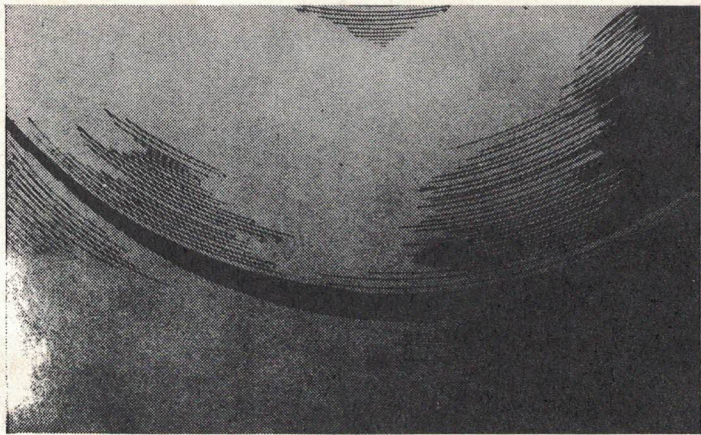
NEAT-O!

I AM SORRY  
THAT I MOMENTARILY  
LOST CONTROL OF  
MYSELF, MY FRIEND...  
BUT EVEN IN THE  
GREAT FRONTIER OF  
SPACE, MAN MUST,  
FROM TIME TO TIME,  
WALK AMONG THE APES!  
...AND LEARN!

NOW, LET US TURN  
OUR ATTENTIONS  
HOMeward!

BRUU-THER!  
THIS GUY COULD  
MAKE A FORTUNE  
DOING SERMONETTES  
BACK HOME...  
WHAT A BUNCHA  
GARBAGE!!!





**NEXT: "PROS"**



SPECIAL FEATURE  
(Continued from Centerfold)

governmental bureau known only as the "Personnel Dept." 12. Melvin Barns, everybody's favorite paranoic who provided a terrifying view of small-town espionage in "The Bartelso Directory". 13-14. The passengers of a run-away space shuttlecraft called "Excaliber," Mort Walker and the Corbein, blazing a path through allegoric literature in a space-age parody of the "Lady of Shalott". Finally, 15 another space wayfarer, the Perfidious Phiddeas Phoom, created by Butch Bertram. The Phoom is a lone survivor of a long-dead race of beings who speak in rhyme and have the ability to give substance to men's innermost dreams and desires. The Phoom is scheduled for an early guest appearance in "Excaliber".

\*\*\*\*\*

FINAL NOTE: A newly revised version of "The Antiman" has gone well past initial planning stages and is scheduled for release roughly around the latter part of October. The new book, based on the original 1972 version, is scripted and drawn by Paul Cordel, who wrote and embellished the original version.



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The  
Staff  
of  
"EXCALIBUR"  
takes great  
pride in  
announcing  
the professional  
debut of  
CHARLES PITTS, JR.  
in his artistic  
rendering of  
**Shibbo**

in a forthcoming  
issue of Jan Strand's  
ANOMALY.



